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RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 9616
RUMJRV/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 1643
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6648
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 3159
RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0451
RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2306
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3149
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 17756

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O.12356: 10/13/88
TAGS: PINT, JA
SUBJECT: FIRST REACTION TO PM SUZUKI'S DECISION NOT TO RUN FOR REELECTION

REFS: (A) TOKYO 17670, (B) TOKYO 17145

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: THERE IS STILL GREAT CONFUSION AFTER PRIME MINISTER SUZUKI'S SUDDEN DECISION TO STEP DOWN. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR BY WHAT PROCESS HIS SUCCESSOR WILL BE SELECTED OR WHO WILL EMERGE AS THE NEW PRIME MINISTER. ALTHOUGH EARLY PRESS SPECULATION IS THAT ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT AGENCY DIRECTOR GENERAL NAKASONE HAS THE INSIDE TRACK, DECISIONS WITHIN THE LDP IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS WILL DETERMINE HOW EVENTS UNFOLD. END SUMMARY.

3. TAKEN ABACK BY PRIME MINISTER SUZUKI'S TOTALLY UNEXPECTED DECISION NOT TO RUN FOR REELECTION AS LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDP) PRESIDENT WHEN HE APPEARED TO HAVE IN HAND THE VOTES NEEDED FOR A SECOND TERM, SENIOR LDP OFFICIALS AND FACTIONS HAVE SPENT THE LAST DAY REGROUPING TO DEAL WITH THE NEW SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

4. PRIME MINISTER SUZUKI'S STATEMENT YESTERDAY, ANNOUNCED BY LDP CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY MIYAZAWA,

State Dept. review completed

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6. A KEY MISSING ELEMENT IS WHETHER SUZUKI WILL TRY TO DESIGNATE A SUCCESSOR ANDIF SO WHETHER HE HAS THE INFLUENCE TO CARRY IT OFF. SOME POLITICAL OBSERVERS ARE ARGUING THAT SINCE SUZUKI STEPPED DOWN WHEN HE HAD THE VOTES TO BE REELECTED, HIS DESIGNATION OF A SUCCESSOR WILL CARRY GREAT AND PROBABLY DEFINITIVE WEIGHT. THIS LINE OF REASONING HAS LED TO SPECULATION THAT THE TANAKA-SUZUKI-NAKASONE COALITION CAN SHIFT TO SUPPORT FOR NAKASONE IF THIS IS SUZUKI'S WISH. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, HOWEVER, IF THIS IS IN FACT SUZUKI'S INTENTION AND WHETHER FUKUDA AS LEADER OF THE ANTI-MAINSTREAM MOVEMENT WOULD STEP BACK AND ALLOW A RELATIVELY ORDERLY AND QUICK SUCCESSION. SUZUKI IS HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE LATER TODAY WHICH SHOULD GIVE US A BETTER SENSE OF HIS INTENTIONS.

(ADDENDUM: AFTER ABOVE WAS DRAFTED, SUZUKI MET THE PRESS AND ESSENTIALLY DID NOT GO BEYOND THE STATEMENT MADE BY MIYAZAWA ON OCTOBER 12. HE REITERATED THE NEED FOR FRESH NEW LEADERSHIP TO RESTORE PARTY UNITY AND COPE WITH PROBLEMS FACED BY JAPAN, BUT HE DID NOT ENDORSE A SUCCESSOR AND SAID HE WOULD LEAVE THIS SELECTION TO THE PARTY LEADERS.)

7. THE COURSE OF EVENTS IS LIKELY TO BE DETERMINED THROUGH MEETINGS WITHIN THE LDP OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS SINCE IF THE LDP'S NEW LEADER IS TO BE SELECTED THROUGH THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, CANDIDATES WILL HAVE TO REGISTER BY OCTOBER 16.

8. COMMENT: IT IS STILL UNCLEAR WHY SUZUKI DECIDED TO STEP DOWN. ONE EXPLANATION WHICH HAS CURRENCY AMONG JAPANESE BUREAUCRATS IS THAT SUZUKI, WHO NEVER SOUGHT THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP, SIMPLY GREW TIRED OF THE WEIGHT OF THE OFFICE AND DID NOT HAVE THE HEART TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS THAT LIE AHEAD. BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE FIND FEW PEOPLE WHO MOURN HIS PASSING AND A WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW AND MORE ENERGETIC LEADERSHIP TO EMERGE. MANSFIELD

END OF MESSAGE

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